

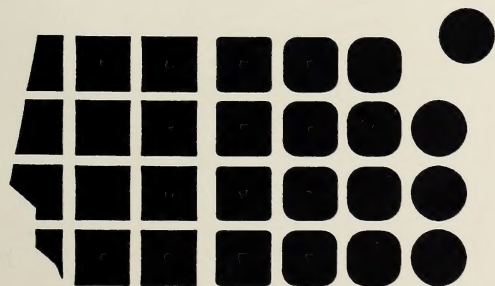
# ACTION PLAN REPORT CARD

CANADIANA

SEP 7 1994

SPRING 1990 TO SPRING 1993


A Report on the  
Implementation of  
Recommendations made by the  
Premier's Council on the Status  
of Persons with Disabilities  
*Action Plan*



**THE PREMIER'S COUNCIL**

ON THE STATUS OF PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES

Alberta



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## BACKGROUND

In March 1990, Premier's Council on the Status of Persons With Disabilities released an *Action Plan*, designed to provide strategic directions in the development and/or reorganization of programs and services for persons with disabilities. The *Action Plan* contained a number of specific recommendations that addressed government policy in ten major areas: Training, Employment, Education, Recreation, Transportation, Housing, Accessibility, Personal Supports, Financial Supports, and Information. Two formalized measures of government activity regarding the *Action Plan* have been taken over the past three years.

In April 1990, government departments whose responsibilities are directly related to the recommendations in the *Action Plan* were asked to provide responses to these recommendations. Departmental responses were outlined in a document produced by Alberta Education entitled "Premier's Council on the Status of Persons with Disabilities *Action Plan* - Implementation Strategies", published in March of 1991.

In this "roll-up" document, the status of each of the *Action Plan* recommendations was noted in terms of its perceived level of implementation. It should be noted that departmental responses published in the original "roll-up" document were essentially unchallenged. Each department provided their responses and these responses were assumed to be accurate and were subsequently recorded. A second review of the *Action Plan* was initiated by the Premier's Council in the summer of 1992. At this point in time the Council wished to review the status of all recommendations from an external perspective with less reliance on the perceptions of government departments as to their own successes. The result is the current "Report Card", the first formal independent review of *Action Plan* recommendations.



## THE "REPORT CARD"

The current review was more "investigative" in nature and found that some of the "status" notations in the original "roll-up" were completely unfounded and inaccurate, most likely because they went unchallenged. While the current review asked all departments to provide a written response to each recommendation under its jurisdiction, senior and mid-level officials of each department were also interviewed regarding each recommendation and sub-recommendation. Where appropriate, officials were asked to provide "proof" of implementation such as policy documents, work plans, RFD's, legislative changes, etc. Finally, as a validity check, a cross section of consumers, advocacy groups and associations representing persons with disabilities were asked to give input as to their perceptions of change that had occurred as a result of the Premier's Council *Action Plan*. While some areas are difficult to assess, consumer perceptions are noted where applicable throughout this report.

The current status of each of the *Action Plan* recommendations is noted in terms of its level of action towards implementation. Considering that government departments have had almost three years to implement the recommendations, the current "roll-up" designates five "levels of action towards implementation" as follows;

- 0 No action has taken place.
- 1 Low - Something (a study, position paper, discussions, consultations) has occurred to address the issue but the action recommended has not been implemented. Commitment at this level appears low to nonexistent.
- 2 Moderate - Some action (pilot projects, evaluations, studies) has taken place and the level of commitment appears limited to moderate.
- 3 High - Action is currently happening with a high level of commitment towards full implementation.
- 4 Fully implemented.



For the purposes of comparison, "action levels" of each recommendation were calculated and compared on a percentage basis to "potential action levels" ( i.e., if they had fully implemented a given recommendation). These "action rates" were then assigned a ranking as follows;

0-29%	Poor
30-49%	Fair
50-64%	Good
65-79%	Very Good
80-100%	Excellent

The following provides an outline and summary of progress organized by the 10 issue areas identified in the Premier's Council *Action Plan*. Note that department names reflect the structure of government prior to the reorganization which took place in December 1992.

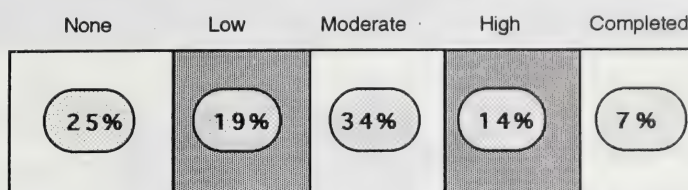
In addition, note that the following is a progress report of verbatim *Action Plan* recommendations only. Government has undertaken isolated initiatives which reflect the spirit and intent of the *Action Plan*; i.e. improved access to the legislature. However, since they are not directly related to a specific *Action Plan* recommendation, these situations are not referred to in this report.

Table 1

Recommendations: Implementation Status x Department

Department	LEVEL OF ACTION				
	None	Low	Moderate	High	Completed
Advanced Education	2	2	1	0	0
Career Development	3	0	6	0	0
Culture	0	0	2	0	0
Economic Development	0	0	0	0	1
Education	8	6	4	2	1
Family and Social Services	2	3	3	0	0
Health	2	2	5	4	1
Labour	3	2	4	2	1
Municipal Affairs	3	2	5	2	1
Lotteries	0	0	1	0	0
Personnel Admin. Office	1	1	0	0	0
Recreation and Parks	0	1	2	0	0
Transportation	0	0	1	4	2
Treasury	1	0	0	0	0
<b>TOTAL #</b>	<b>25</b>	<b>19</b>	<b>34</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>7</b>

**Figure 1**  
**RECOMMENDATIONS: OVERALL ACTION LEVELS**



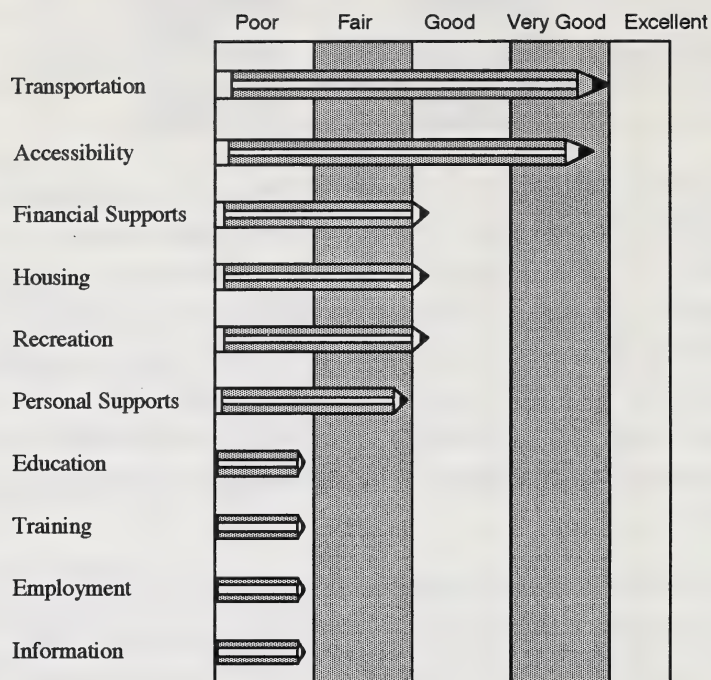
On a positive note, fifty-five percent (55%) of the recommendations have received a moderate to high level of recognition and implementation. Twenty-one percent (21%) of the recommendations are either implemented or well on their way towards that goal. This level of impact is significant and the departments primarily responsible should be commended. The thirty-four percent (34%) of the recommendations that fall in the "moderate" range of implementation may well need a "kick-start". As a group, they have received a moderate level of attention in the past but appear for the most part to be in danger of not meeting their original goals without some further stimulus.

The final group of recommendations, those falling in the none to low action categories will need serious reconsideration from at least three perspectives. 1) What was the original goal and is it still important and valid? 2) Who was the target for implementing this recommendation and was that target appropriate? 3) What new actions and strategies, directed at whom, appear to provide the highest potential for continuing with the mandate of the Council to help improve the lives of persons with disabilities.

It is clear that some recommendations need to be "redirected". Others may need to be refocused in terms of their intent. However, there is also a sizable group of recommendations that have simply been either ignored or disregarded. Since most of the original issues that spawned the Premier's Council *Action Plan* are still current, it will be critical to refocus on these problem areas and to identify the primary barriers to resolution. The following figures provide an overview of progress organized by the ten major areas of need outlined in the *Action Plan*.



**Figure 2**  
**ACHIEVEMENT**  
**BY AREAS OF NEED**



It should be noted that the collection of all data for this report occurred before the reorganization of government departments in December of 1992. While some departmental structures mentioned in this report have changed, many of the barriers to progress outlined in the report still exist in some form or another.

# TRAINING

## *Departments Responsible*

- *Career Development & Employment (CDE)*
- *Family & Social Services (FSS)*
- *Advanced Education*

## **BACKGROUND**

The objective of this series of recommendations was to initiate actions so that "By immediately developing and pursuing a more comprehensive and aggressive policy on post secondary education and training for persons with disabilities, a shift in labour force participation will occur to closely approximate the general workforce participation rates by the year 1995." The primary focus of the recommendations was on "training for employment and removing barriers to accessing training, so that persons with disabilities will be prepared to participate equitably in the job market."

## **HIGHLIGHTS**

- Career Development and Employment has developed a policy paper intended to address many of the issues. However, this paper has yet to be "actioned".
- Career Development and Employment has initiated a pilot project with Family and Social Services for the transfer of FSS programs that are cost shareable under the Vocational Rehabilitation of Disabled Persons (VRDP) Agreement.
- Career Development and Employment has improved access to VRDP funding and subsequently the provision of employment preparation and placement services for persons with disabilities across the province.
- Family and Social Services has changed policies so as to remove many employment disincentives from those persons receiving Assured Income for the Severely Handicapped (AISH).

- A permanent position has been identified in Family and Social Services to take responsibility for non-vocational training services.

- The Students' Finance Board of Advanced Education has increased the total assistance to disadvantaged students studying on a full-time basis.

### ***NEEDS TO BE ADDRESSED***

- Mandates across three departments, Career Development and Employment, Family and Social Services, and Advanced Education are still unclear and uncoordinated, however the recent amalgamation of Advanced Education and Career Development should facilitate movement in this area.

- The pilot project between CDE and FSS has been implemented but province wide action will be delayed until evaluation is completed in 1994.

- Training in segregated facilities continues under Family and Social Services, although the number of clients still receiving facility based services has been halved.

- Family and Social Services has not pursued a mandate to provide non-vocational training services for **all** persons with disabilities.

- The Students' Finance Board of Advanced Education has made little or no changes regarding supports for part time studies for students with disabilities.

- Advanced Education has taken no action to improve the provision of transitional programs other than those with specific employment outcomes.

- Career Development and Employment is unable to meet the demands for supports under the VRDP Agreement due to funding restrictions.

### ***BOTTOM LINE***

Access to training and training supports (eg. funding) has improved to **some** extent through efforts of Career Development and Employment to improve access to VRDP, and through the individualized funding mechanisms of Family and Social Services. Advanced Education has done little to help facilitate the original training objective outlined in the *Action Plan*. Overall, movement in this area appears marginal and subsequent shift in labour force participation should not be expected. Ironically, a change in leadership may be the most significant event to impact this area of need since



two of the primary departments involved have been required to amalgamate and subsequently clarify mandates.

# EMPLOYMENT

## *Departments Responsible*

- Career Development & Employment
- Alberta Labour
- Personnel Administration Office (PAO)
- Economic Development & Trade

## **BACKGROUND**

The primary objective of this series of recommendations was to ***"Increase the labour force participation rate and the employment rate of persons with disabilities to more closely approximate that of the general population by 1995. Equitable representation of persons with disabilities at all earning levels by the year 2000."*** The Premier's Council believes that "employment is an important key to independence," and that this "has not been sufficiently emphasized for persons with disabilities." To improve employment for persons with disabilities, the Council recommended that "policies be developed and implemented on provincial employment equity and provision of supports needed to access and maintain employment."

## **HIGHLIGHTS**

- Career Development and Employment has developed a policy paper intended to address many of the issues outlined under "Employment". However, this paper is internal to that department and has yet to be "actioned".
- Career Development and Employment has improved Training On The Job programs and has also introduced vocational crisis support for individuals in danger of losing jobs due to disabling conditions. Both of these programs are commendable but have very low usage levels probably due to a lack of public awareness.
- Economic Development and Trade has established a "Capability Plus" loans program targeted at persons with disabilities as a means of piloting new initiatives such as micro loans for new, small business ventures. The program continues and has received very positive reviews.

## ***NEEDS TO BE ADDRESSED***

- Section 36 of the Employment Standards Act (ESA) continues to allow an exemption to the minimum wage for employers who hire people with handicaps who are less than competitively productive. Alberta Labour has reviewed this and believes that it remains necessary at this time but that it is well monitored and controlled. This recommendation needs further examination.
- Policy and "action" on "supports in employment" is still needed.
- Expand employment equity policies for people with disabilities within the Alberta Public Service.
- The special placement program of the Alberta Government needs expansion and improvement.
- Transfer of responsibility and resources for employment services and programs from Family and Social Services to Career Development and Employment is being tested under the umbrella of a pilot project in the Red Deer/Lacombe area.

## ***BOTTOM LINE***

Little has occurred to facilitate the original employment objectives outlined in the *Action Plan*. Overall, movement in this area appears marginal and significant shift in labour force participation should not be expected. As with the area of training, increased departmental support coming from changes at senior levels may be the most significant event to impact this area of need. Proposed changes to Personnel Administration Office policies and programs, along with changes in Career Development and Employment could be a "window of opportunity" for furthering the original objectives within this section of the *Action Plan*.



# EDUCATION

## *Departments Responsible*

- *Alberta Education*

## **BACKGROUND**

The primary objective of this series of recommendations was that ***"By the year 2000, all children will have, as their right, access in their home communities, in their neighborhood schools, to the same quality of education which is available to all other students."*** The Premier's Council maintains that because of "fragmented and uncoordinated services, funding issues, and inadequate teacher preparation and support," Alberta school jurisdictions may not be able to meet the needs of some students with disabilities. To address some of these issues, the Council recommends, among other things, that schools "emphasize integration as the first option" for disabled students, "focus on increased accessibility of schools, improve the assessment and appeals processes and support for teachers," and provide "better methods of accountability for special education funds."

## **HIGHLIGHTS**

- Alberta Education has developed guidelines and funding mechanisms to assist school jurisdictions to provide school buildings that are barrier free.
- Early Childhood Services (ECS) policy has been revised to reflect the acceptance of all children with disabilities in the age group served by an operator.
- Alberta Education has assigned responsibility for implementation of these recommendations to the Director of the Education Response Centre.
- Alberta Education has developed supports (including inservice workshops and kits) for the placement of special needs students in integrated settings which best meets their needs.

- Alberta Education has developed a set of "user friendly" checklists, questionnaires and tests to facilitate the identification of "at risk" students.
- The Council on Alberta Teaching Standards is reviewing and revising standards for teacher training. These standards will address the training of teachers for special needs children.
- Alberta Education has provided leadership to bring together government departments to address mandate issues and coordination of services to children. Negotiations are under way with five Alberta communities to test out new ways of providing improved services.

### ***NEEDS TO BE ADDRESSED***

- Alberta Education has spent at least two years developing a policy paper on the integration of special needs children. Despite extensive consultation with parents, students, trustees, teachers, administrators and advocacy groups, this "paper" is still being "reviewed" and has not been made policy of the department.
- Alberta Education continues to provide little or no direction in terms of screening at the Early Childhood Services level.
- Alberta Education has only superficially addressed many of the concerns regarding assessment practices with special needs children across the province.
- The appeal process continues to be difficult to understand, long, arduous, cumbersome and adversarial. Alternative dispute resolution methods such as mediation are rarely used.
- Parents and students continue, on a large scale, to be left out of "active" involvement in program design and implementation. Alberta Education has done very little in the past three years to work with school jurisdictions to strengthen parent/student rights in this area.
- Alberta Education continues to have no provincial standards for the development, evaluation and monitoring of special education programs and student performance outcomes.
- Alberta Education accepts human resource allocations, supports etc. as local school jurisdiction responsibility. As a result, many special needs children continue to be

taught by individuals who have no training or supports to help them address those children's needs unless particular jurisdictions have developed their own training standards.

- Alberta Education has not developed policies that articulate responsibility for the health and medical care needs of students within the public school system. Much discussion has taken place with Alberta Health, but no resolution has occurred.

- Alberta Education has done no further work to improve funding accountability for special education grants.

- While the Special Education Review addressed areas of service coordination, student performance standards and outcomes, school board accountability of funds designated for students with disabilities, etc., Alberta Education has not fully implemented many of their own recommendations in the Special Education report. Actions requiring interdepartmental cooperation have not been resolved.

- There continue to be no requirements or standards for paraprofessionals working with special needs children. Alberta Education does not view this as their mandate.

### ***BOTTOM LINE***

Alberta Education's "position" on many issues continues to be vague and non-directive. Instead of policies and standards that give clear direction to school systems, Alberta Education appears to prefer to redirect responsibility for educational policy and programs to local school jurisdictions. Teachers continue to be ill prepared to meet the special needs of children with disabilities, program standards and accountability criteria are vague or non-existent and coordination across government departments is poor. The end result is that most of the educational concerns addressed in the original Premier's Council *Action Plan* continue to be inadequately addressed.



# RECREATION

## *Departments Responsible*

- Recreation & Parks
- Culture & Multiculturalism

## **BACKGROUND**

The primary objective of this series of recommendations was "To create full accessibility to all publicly funded recreation facilities and leisure pursuits by the year 2000, so that every Albertan has an equitable opportunity to improve the quality of his or her life through pursuit of recreational and leisure activities of choice." The Premier's Council *Action Plan* noted that "Integration/segregation of facilities and events in the areas of culture, recreation and sports" are key areas for improvement. The Departments of Recreation and Culture and Multiculturalism were urged, among other things to "develop minimum standards for barrier free design and access to publicly funded parks and recreation facilities," and to "include the needs of people with sensory disabilities for access to cultural events."

## **HIGHLIGHTS**

- Alberta Tourism, Parks and Recreation is committed to ensuring barrier-free design standards, as per the Alberta Building Code, in all new facilities, and improving barrier-free design standards in existing facilities.
- The network of provincial museums, historic sites, interpretive centres and archives, has taken measures to assist visitors with disabilities.
- Alberta Tourism, Parks and Recreation and Alberta Culture and Multiculturalism have each assigned a senior staff member to be responsible for the development of barrier free policy.
- Alberta Tourism, Parks and Recreation and Alberta Culture and Multiculturalism encourage grant recipients to ensure access for persons with disabilities.

### ***NEEDS TO BE ADDRESSED***

- Alberta Tourism, Parks and Recreation and Alberta Culture and Multiculturalism have not developed policies or minimum standards for barrier free access.
- Supports and services to enable persons with disabilities to access community cultural and recreational programs continues to be an issue for many consumer groups.

### ***BOTTOM LINE***

Access to recreational and cultural facilities has improved significantly in many areas. However, there continue to be few, if any, standards or policies to ensure that these efforts continue in the future. Also, there appears to be somewhat of a "catch-22" between those who run facilities and their potential consumers. "Providers" indicate that demand is so low for programs or access for special needs populations that low priority is given on a very limited budget. Consumers, on the other hand, indicate that because facilities have limited programs or access, they rarely use these facilities. It is clear however that consumer groups must specify on a prioritized basis their needs and wishes so that changes can occur to serve the greatest good.

# TRANSPORTATION

## *Departments Responsible*

- *Alberta Transportation & Utilities*

## **BACKGROUND**

The primary objective of this series of recommendations was to promote ***"Barrier free transportation systems within the province that meet transportation needs for local and interprovincial travel, as well as barrier free pedestrian environments within municipalities, by the year 2000"***. To facilitate this objective, the Council advocated a provincial policy on barrier free mobility, including the development of barrier free standards for transportation and pedestrian environments. To this end, Alberta Transportation and Utilities was asked to consider several options to meet the transportation needs of Albertans, including accessible public transportation, adapted private vehicles and parallel transit systems.

## **HIGHLIGHTS**

- Alberta Transportation and Utilities, in cooperation with an appointed Advisory Committee on Barrier Free Transportation has developed a policy statement, called ***"Learning by Doing"***, addressing most of the recommendations of this section of the ***Action Plan***.
- Alberta Transportation and Utilities has initiated discussions with appropriate authorities to implement policies outlined in their new policy statement. Several pilot projects are ongoing in selected municipalities to demonstrate the feasibility of alternatives like low floor city buses, community buses and accessible taxis. Municipalities have responded favourably.
- The Highway Traffic Act has been amended regarding designated parking use and Alberta Transportation and Utilities has developed a model by-law for municipalities.

- A stakeholder based Advisory Committee on Barrier Free Transportation has been established to coordinate activities with disabled groups, municipalities, industry, and within the department.
- A senior staff person in Alberta Transportation and Utilities has been assigned responsibility for the development and implementation of the barrier free transportation policy.

### ***NEEDS TO BE ADDRESSED***

- The current demonstration projects should provide the necessary information for widespread use of accessible buses and taxis. Alberta Transportation and Utilities will need to determine if and how they can facilitate broad implementation, possibly through specific funding initiatives. Changes to the existing grant programs as outlined in the *Action Plan* are not fully supported.

### ***BOTTOM LINE***

Alberta Transportation and Utilities has indicated strong support for the objectives of the Premier's Council regarding transportation. Significant action has taken place towards meeting the intent of the recommendations outlined in this section of the report. Feedback from consumer groups has been positive. However, as noted by departmental officials, implementing many of these recommendations requires long term commitment and a developmental approach towards an improved system of services. Alberta Transportation and Utilities appears to be fully committed to these tasks.



# HOUSING

## ***Departments Responsible***

- *Alberta Municipal Affairs & Housing*
- *Alberta Labour*

## ***BACKGROUND***

The primary objective of this series of recommendations was that ***"By the year 2000, persons with disabilities will have the same range of accessible and affordable housing options that other Albertans accept as their right."*** The *Action Plan* recommendations for housing focus on shelter, and include such issues as the range of options available (e.g., apartments, cooperatives, group homes, room and board), location of appropriate housing, improved accessibility, financial supports, and increased availability of transitional housing.

## ***HIGHLIGHTS***

- A Cross-Disability Advisory Committee has been established by the Housing Division of Municipal Affairs to help address issues related to housing for persons with disabilities.
- Alberta Municipal Affairs and Housing, along with the Cross-Disability Advisory Committee, has developed a housing policy for persons with disabilities.
- Changes to the Alberta Building Code increase the number of adapted units required for public housing projects to a level of at least 10% for most projects.
- Changes to the Alberta Building Code set standards for adaptation of buildings and require that units of less than four storeys are accessible on the first storey.

## ***NEEDS TO BE ADDRESSED***

- The federal government phase-out of Special Purpose Housing assistance for transitional and emergency facilities will affect the Housing Division's ability to respond to this need in the future.

- Local housing registries are being supported but a provincial registry has yet to be developed.
- Funding recommendations regarding rent subsidies and the Home Adaptation Program have not been implemented.
- There has been no action regarding changes in the zoning by-laws for group homes.
- There continues to be a shortage of accessible and affordable housing for persons with disabilities.

### ***BOTTOM LINE***

Alberta Labour deserves full marks for its strong support of the Alberta Building Code recommendations which significantly improved access to housing. Alberta Municipal Affairs and Housing is also complimented on the establishment of the Cross-Disability Advisory Committee and development of a housing policy. Overall, however, little has changed to address many of the recommendations regarding housing. A shortage of accessible and affordable housing for persons with disabilities still exists. Recommended changes to funding programs have not taken place, and an overall policy on housing for persons with disabilities still needs to be implemented. There is progress but it is somewhat slow moving.

# ACCESSIBILITY

## *Departments Responsible*

- *Alberta Labour*
- *Alberta Treasury*
- *Alberta Lotteries*

## **BACKGROUND**

The primary objective of this series of recommendations was to provide "Improved barrier free design and enforcement standards that will ensure that all new public buildings and external built environments such as sidewalks and parking areas are completely accessible to all persons with disabilities by the year 1996." Changes recommended included improving the status of the Barrier Free Design Committee, improved enforcement of barrier free design requirements, and tax credits to business to improve accessibility for persons with disabilities.

## **HIGHLIGHTS**

- The Alberta Building Code has been amended and includes changes that respond positively to most of the *Action Plan* recommendations.
- The Barrier Free Design Committee has cross-disability representation and has served an important role in guiding changes to the Alberta Building Code.
- The Barrier Free Design Guide has been completed and will be distributed early in 1993. This guide should help to improve understanding and awareness of the public, private business and the building industry.
- Public Works, Supply and Services has been incorporating modifications to improve accessibility within some of its maintenance programs, and will continue to design all new facilities to meet Code requirements.

- Alberta Lotteries has not made the specific changes recommended. They have, however, highlighted "access" as an important criterion in reviewing grant applications for the second phase of the Community Facility Enhancement Program.

### ***NEEDS TO BE ADDRESSED***

- The role of the Barrier Free Design Committee has not been established in relationship to the new Alberta Safety Council, which replaces the Building Standards Council.
- Awards and centres to promote barrier free design are viewed by Alberta Labour as best pursued with the building industry and the public sector, but no action has occurred to date.
- Very little has changed regarding building code enforcement. Although the new Safety Codes Act does address the training and competency for new inspectors, enforcement of barrier free design requirements remains an area of much concern.
- Much work is still needed to improve the awareness of the public, private business and building industry.
- Alberta Treasury has rejected the concept of providing tax credits to businesses for barrier free design improvements.

### ***BOTTOM LINE***

Through the support of Alberta Labour, changes have been made to the Alberta Building Code that should serve to significantly improve access to, and accommodation within, public buildings. Cross-disability issues have been addressed in the Code as well as in the subsequent Barrier-Free Design Guide. The "Guide" should also help in addressing awareness issues within the private sector. Much work is still required in educating the public and private industry (businesses, building professionals) as to the needs of persons with disabilities as well as the benefits of addressing these needs. Further work will also be necessary in addressing the whole question of building code compliance.



## PERSONAL SUPPORTS

### *Departments Responsible*

- Alberta Health
- Family & Social Services
- Alberta Education

### **BACKGROUND**

This is perhaps the most controversial of all sections of the *Action Plan*. The primary objective of this series of recommendations was to facilitate the development of **"A comprehensive , personal supports unit that is capable of meeting the support needs of persons with disabilities, regardless of their age or stage of life, to be developed by April 1, 1992"**. Personal supports are defined as "technical aids (e.g., wheelchairs, hearing aids) and human services (e.g., personal care attendant) to assist individuals at home and in the community." The Council's recommendations are based upon the premise that the province spends hundreds of millions of dollars providing these types of supports each year but through a multitude of programs with differing eligibility criteria, overlapping mandates and confusing parameters. The resultant "programs" create confusion, frustration and gaps in service. The *Action Plan*, therefore, calls for "consolidation of existing programs into a single unit that would serve individuals regardless of age or the purpose for which assistance is required." Implementing this recommendation would mean significant changes in the way the current bureaucracy operates. Services would be consolidated from major programs in Health, Family and Social Services, Career Development and Employment, Education and a host of other departments.

### **HIGHLIGHTS**

- The Minister of Education established a Community Supports Unit Task Force to provide direction in the design and implementation of the unit. In conjunction with the Premier's Council, Alberta Health, Alberta Family and Social Services, and other departments that might be affected, the Task Force met over an eight month period. The result was a report addressing some of the recommendations under 8.2. However the Task Force recommended an incremental approach to implementation which would not

necessarily ensure the development of the Community Supports Unit as originally envisioned by the Premier's Council. The result was rejection by the Premier's Council and no further work being carried out on this recommendation.

- Many positive changes have occurred through the Coordinated Home Care Program to decrease hospitalization and to improve supports to persons with disabilities within their homes.

- Expansion of the eligibility criteria for the Coordinated Home Care Program to people under 65 has been implemented.

- Health has piloted, and is currently implementing province wide, a model for direct funding under the Coordinated Home Care Program. Evaluation of the pilot was very positive. This model is also intended to explore options regarding individual lifestyle planning.

- Positive changes have occurred within the Alberta Aids to Daily Living (AADL) program. The program is currently applicable to people of all ages with the following exceptions. Pediatric equipment is only available to children 0-18 years of age, and hearing aids are available only to those under 18 and over 65 years. Cost sharing is universally applied and is based upon ability to pay. The maximum yearly contribution to be made by any family has been reduced from \$1000 to \$500.

- AADL has increased the role of community agencies in assessing and providing technical supports.

- Positive "plans" have been developed for the improvement of services and programs for individuals with chronic mental illnesses.

- Alberta Health has developed a multi-year strategic plan for brain injury initiatives. However, this plan is internal to the department and departmental personnel were not willing to share the contents. It is therefore not clear if all aspects of this recommendation have been addressed. Some initiatives have been funded in 1992 and 1993.

- A consultant was contracted by Family and Social Services to research and develop proposed Individual Lifestyle Planning protocols. The result is a General Lifestyle Planning document.

- A consultant was contracted by Family and Social Services to research issues related to Handicapped Children's Services but no report has been released.
- The rate of de-institutionalization of people with mental handicaps has increased through additional funding made available to support people in the community.
- Family and Social Services has developed a policy statement on Services for Persons with Developmental Disabilities.

### ***NEEDS TO BE ADDRESSED***

- A comprehensive personal supports program that is capable of meeting the support needs of persons with disabilities has not been developed.
- Personal supports for individuals with mental handicaps remains in Family and Social Services.
- Alberta Aids To Daily Living continues the practice of using specified suppliers. There continue to be concerns regarding quality assurance and the desire and/or ability of all people to accept this responsibility for themselves.
- Recommended changes for paying Alberta Blue Cross benefits have not been made.
- Very little "action" has occurred to improve services and programs for individuals with chronic mental illnesses.
- Health personnel were not willing to share the strategic plan for brain injury initiatives. It is therefore not clear if all aspects of this recommendation have been addressed.
- Actions related to deinstitutionalization have not addressed equity of access to funding or other supports for community living, and may have increased the inequities for some people.
- Family and Social Services have taken no "actions" to implement the recommendations regarding Handicapped Childrens' Services. A report was developed in 1992 with recommendations for change, this report is currently with the Minister of Family and Social Services and no further action has taken place.

## ***BOTTOM LINE***

Persons with disabilities needing help to integrate into their local communities continue to be provided personal supports through a complex structure of programs and services scattered throughout numerous uncoordinated government departments and programs. Many of these programs and services continue to have extensive regional differences. However, while coordination and articulation of programs and services has not improved to any large extent, the mechanics and operations of some programs has improved. Improvements to the Coordinated Home Care Program and the Aids To Daily Living Program have significantly improved services to persons with disabilities. Actions have also been taken to improve programs and services for individuals with mental handicaps, chronic mental illnesses, and brain injuries although programs and services for these groups are still in the infancy stages. Movements towards self-managed care in Health are slow but progressive. More work needs to be done with AADL to pursue a self-managed concept regarding equipment purchases.

Progress on recommendations related to Family and Social Services has been slow. The Michener Centre Act threatens to keep Alberta a "pro-institutional state". Changes to Handicapped Childrens' Services have been talked about and "studied" but actions are limited. Senior management in Family and Social Services have been very clear about their rejection of the Community Supports concept. Overall, changes to Family and Social Services programs for persons with mental handicaps have been isolating and have increased the sense of inequity among groups of people with similar support needs.



# FINANCIAL SUPPORTS

## *Departments Responsible*

- *Career Development & Employment*
- *Family & Social Services*

## **BACKGROUND**

The primary objective of this series of recommendations was to facilitate the development of **"A revamped income support system that renews its commitment to the dignity and independence of persons with severe disabilities by 1992."** The council feels that, in recent years, income support in the form of Assured Income for the Severely Handicapped (AISH) has fallen behind to the point where it no longer meets the needs of some individuals. The recommendations call for a return to the original intent of the AISH program to provide an improved level of support with the addition of benefits similar to those available through the Handicapped Benefit package of the Supports For Independence (SFI) program.

## **HIGHLIGHTS**

- Alberta Family and Social Services have reviewed and revised their overall income support programs. The new "Supports For Independence Program (SFI)." was announced in the fall of 1990.
- The AISH program is designed to be non-stigmatizing with minimal intrusion into an individual's affairs. The SFI program has more "checks and balances".
- AISH recipients are now eligible for VRDP funding. Persons with disabilities are also eligible for assessment services to determine suitability for training and employment.
- Changes in the administration of the AISH program provides more flexibility in allowing for employment while still maintaining benefits.
- Career Development and Employment has expanded the AISH/VRDP Assessment Project to the entire province.

### ***NEEDS TO BE ADDRESSED***

- Changes have not been made to the AISH program to include many benefits available through the Handicapped Benefit of the SFI Program.
- The SFI program combined with the handicapped benefit continues to be more beneficial to some recipients than the AISH program, depending upon an individuals circumstances.
- Individuals continue to switch back and forth between the SFI program and the AISH program in order to have their needs met.
- There are no plans or proposals (RFD's etc.) being put forward at this point to establish the AISH/VRDP Assessment Project on a permanent basis.

### ***BOTTOM LINE***

Many positive changes have occurred in the revisions of income support programs. Flexibility, particularly for AISH recipients, to work and/or train while maintaining their benefits, has been improved. However, more work is still needed to eliminate the inequities between the AISH and the new Supports For Independence (SFI) Program.

# INFORMATION

## *Departments Responsible*

- *Alberta Recreation & Parks (Recreation, Parks and Wildlife Foundation)*

## **BACKGROUND**

The primary objective of this series of recommendations was "To establish by 1992 a province wide disability-related information network to meet the needs of persons with disabilities, their families and other stakeholders". The goal is to provide easy access to current information about programs and services for persons with disabilities. The proposed "vehicle" of change was an Alberta Information Network in collaboration with Disability Information Services of Canada, that could be funded through an existing initiative of the Recreation, Parks and Wildlife Foundation.

## **HIGHLIGHTS**

- The Alberta Information Network (AIN) is being developed but as a separate project apart from the Alberta Centre for Well Being (which was funded by Recreation, Parks and Wildlife Foundation).
- A stakeholder advisory committee has been established.
- Recent announcement of the consolidation of certain provincial registries (land titles, motor vehicles, etc) into local "one stop" offices may result in a suitable technical network to support AIN.

## **NEEDS TO BE ADDRESSED**

- There is still no operational province wide disability-related information network.

## **BOTTOM LINE**

Easy access to information about government programs for persons with disabilities continues to be a major challenge. Although this problem has been identified

for many years, the "outcomes" of various projects have been disappointing. As this "report card" of actions has unfolded, one of the most common problems has been that of the sharing of information. Government departments, programs and services are a complex array of disjointed and often disconnected pieces. To know and understand these programs and all of their requirements would challenge the most astute and tenacious investigator. Without an information network to provide and clarify this information, access to available programs and services will require an inordinate amount of energy and persistence on behalf of the consumer.



## SUMMARY

The Premier's Council *Action Plan* has had a profound and positive effect upon the way government departments address issues related to persons with disabilities. Perhaps the most significant effect, unrelated to any specific recommendation, is the awareness and sensitization factors that have been infused into the bureaucratic thinking process. Numerous senior officials have made reference to the growing awareness within government circles regarding the need to consider "disability" related issues when planning for the future. The *Action Plan* provides the foundation for many departments for such planning.

Overall, many departments have taken the *Action Plan* seriously and have made a reasonable effort to implement the various recommendations. Within these departments, even when recommendations were not implemented as stated, other "vehicles of change" were used to address the original issues. Two departments that have made outstanding progress in implementing recommendations and/or addressing concerns in some other positive way include Alberta Economic Development and Trade, Alberta Transportation and Utilities. Alberta Health and Alberta Labour also deserve honorable mention for significant progress particularly in the areas of Home Care and accessibility, respectively. As noted earlier, fifty-five percent (55%) of the recommendations have received a moderate to high level of recognition and implementation. Twenty-one percent (21%) of the recommendations are either implemented or well on their way towards that goal. This level of impact is significant and the departments primarily responsible should be commended.

Unfortunately, awareness has not always resulted in a high level of action in other departments. Thirty-four percent (34%) of the recommendations fall in the "moderate" range of implementation and may well need a "kick-start". As a group, they have received a moderate level of attention in the past but appear to be in need of stimulation. Forty-four percent (44%) of the recommendations have received very little, if any, action. Departments involved in these less "active" areas will need to be worked with closely. Some recommendations will need to be "redirected" while others are refocused in terms of their intent. Those that have been either ignored or disregarded will need serious reconsideration from at least three perspectives. 1)



What was the original goal and is it still important and valid? 2) Who was the target for implementing this recommendation and was that target appropriate? 3) What new actions and strategies, directed at whom, appear to provide the highest potential for success in improving the lives of persons with disabilities. Since many of the original issues that spawned the Premier's Council *Action Plan* are still current, it will be critical for all concerned to refocus on the problem areas and to identify the primary barriers to resolution.

Other than the action levels of some departments, one of the key problems for consumer groups is easy access to information. As noted earlier, this problem has been identified for many years with very little resulting action. Government departments, programs and services continue to be a complex array of disjointed and often disconnected pieces. Many officials openly admitted that they do not "advertise" their programs because they are afraid of increasing the usage levels. The end result is that some of the recommendations of the *Action Plan* have technically been addressed but very few people know about them. In the end, only those with the highest levels of energy and persistence could possibly unravel the mysteries of all of these programs and their requirements. Without an articulation of these programs and services, along with an information network easily accessible to the public, the consumer will be in a most difficult position for understanding and accessing supports to live in the community.

In summary, the *Action Plan* is currently in need of revitalization. While many positive steps have been taken, "action" has slowed in many departments and the level of priority has diminished significantly. The "plan" has begun to take its place among the plethora of government reports sitting idly in bureaucrats offices. Some departments have taken considerable and positive action and their efforts should be recognized and supported in the future. Other departments have "shuffled" their way over the past three years and appear to be waiting for the plan to disappear into the abyss of apathy that has befallen many plans of the past. These departments need to be worked with in a positive and constructive manner that will see action and progress. Ministers and senior officials will clearly need to be brought on side.

Many of the original concerns that initiated the *Action Plan* still need to be addressed. A revitalized initiative, along with concerted effort and a strategic plan of action will be needed to ensure that the Council carries out its mandate through the directions of the *Action Plan*.



